

The Republican.

No. 17, Vol. 10.] LONDON, Friday, Oct. 29, 1824. [PRICE 6d.

TO CHARLES BYAM WOLLASTON, ESQUIRE,
VISITING MAGISTRATE FOR DORCHESTER
GAOL.

SIR, Dorchester Gaol, Oct. 16, 1824.

YOUR name on its cover, informs me, that, through the medium of the Chaplain, you have wished me to read a book, just published, entitled; "The evidence of Christianity derived from its nature and reception. By J. B. Sumner, M. A. Prebendary of Durham; Vicar of Mapledurham, Oxon, and late Fellow of Eton College." I have read this book, I am sorry to say it, without improvement, as it has added nothing new to my former reading; and, as such, has been a tedious waste of time. It is worth a five pound note, to a person industriously seeking improvement and advancement in knowledge, to have his time and his patience occupied with four hundred pages, that teach him nothing more than the bad foundation of a system, of which he is already well informed. I will not sue for damages; I will not retaliate; I will return you good for evil, by writing something addressed to you, that shall be worth reading, if it does not add to your stock of knowledge. I learn that you are a book-reader; but whether you have yet waded through the quagmire of English Statutes, and have grasped at more useful knowledge, I have not learned. If not, I will make a little text book for you—a sort of Alphabet to Atheism: a Primer for children in the school of Common Sense: Reading in Atheism made easy to juvenile capacities: for very old men may be very young Atheists. It is a manly attainment, that does not exactly grow with our growth, nor increase with our years. Yet we cannot be men without it, as far as the word *manhood* implies superiority or perfection.

Last year, you, somewhat insolently, expressed a hope,

Printed and Published by R. Carlile, 34, Fleet Street.

that the conversation of the Chaplain was beneficial to me. It was, in reality, a gross insult; because, you must have known, that your Chaplain could teach me nothing, if you had taken pains to be correctly informed upon that subject. The Chaplain, I am sure, could not have made a profession of the kind, as he has always shewn to me a becoming modesty on that head; in return for which, I have made a promise not to enforce a conversion upon him. There is a sort of truce of amity and mutual toleration between us; to be observed, at least, when we meet. Convenience is generally the most convincing argument; therefore, I never expect to convert a priest. But, in return for your *intruded observation* of last year, and your *intruded book* of this, I will either make you honestly avow Atheism, or, at least, shew you so many reasons why I am not a Christian, as to leave you no grounds whereupon honestly to profess Christianity.

My texts are threefold:—1st. That there is no such an intelligent God in existence as any man has preached. 2. That the Jews had no ancestors inhabiting Judea or the coasts of Syria prior to the Babylonian Colonization. 3. That no such person as the Jesus Christ of the New Testament existed in Judea or elsewhere.

1st. That there is no such an intelligent God in existence as any man has preached.

The foundation of all argument upon this subject is found in the fact, that we no where see intelligence where we do not see animal sensation. Here is the bulwark of Atheism.

Paley has unfolded the wonderful mechanism of matter, to draw an inference, that there must be an intelligent contriver of all things. But all that he has proved is, that he, like you and me, was ignorant of the powers, processes, and certain phenomena of matter. To have proved an intelligent contriver of all things, or even the necessity of such a contriver, he should have first proved, that matter was of itself unequal to the productions, the identities, that we find produced. If we mix flour and water, and leave it to rot and ferment, it produces one kind of insects. If we mix rotten wood and water, we produce another kind of insects. If we leave animal matter to putrefy and ferment, we produce another kind. And if we leave water itself to putrefy, we produce at once a variety. Each of these productions, from these well known arrangements of matter, is as wonderful in its creation and character, as any animal, or any vegetable, that Paley has adduced and commented upon.

The subject can be better exposed, by taking Paley's side of the question, and by carrying it further, by carrying it to all its bearings.

Suppose the necessity of an intelligent contriver for all existing identities. By identities, I mean all fixed matter, that may be seen and handled. What is the consequence? Mr. Sumner, at page 273, and every ignorant man with him, says: "Every plant, every animal, every object of nature which we cast our eyes upon, contains a refutation of Atheism." Why does it contain a refutation of Atheism? Because, we are ignorant of the processes of generation and growth? This is asserting no more, in fact, than that our ignorance is a refutation of Atheism. If this be a satisfactory proof for you, it is not so for me; I will not rest there: I will not assert what I do not know: I will plead ignorance and endeavour to remove it. The only difference between Atheism and Theism is, that the former modestly pleads ignorance where it cannot advance with certainty; the latter, still more ignorant, presumptuously and conceitedly attempts to hide its ignorance by fables, by feigning causes which cannot be shewn to exist, and which subjects it to ridicule, wherever it meets with criticism.

But what is the consequence of the necessity of an intelligent contriver? That he must be always present to superintend and effect his contrivances. Is it not so? Is not this inference stronger than Paley's? Why do you and I contrive things? why do we and others labour, but to produce by contrivance something independent of the power of this intelligent contriver of all things? Do you see the contradiction? If you or I sow a seed to produce a cabbage, who or what is the actual contriver of that cabbage? Would the cabbage have been contrived, if the seed had not been sown, and the ground or bed qualified for its reception? A man and his wife contrive to make a child: must your great intelligent contriver be by to assist? But that is a bad illustration for you; because you are a bachelor and a very high prude.

Paley, to strengthen the cause of his intelligent contriver, supposes a piece of mechanism, a watch, for instance, that shall perform the work of a time piece and eventually produce its like; but there is nothing in contrivance equal to this; no piece of artificial mechanism can be brought to this, the sole power of matter in its natural state; therefore, there is no analogy in the attempted comparison.

The inference of an intelligent contriver of all things is,

that he, or she, or it, for it need not be either masculine or feminine, must be every where present at the same time, contriving all the contrivances that are contrived. This ridiculous notion comes from man supposing himself to be the most important thing in existence. Why is he more important, than any other animal? Has he reason? To what useful purpose does he apply that reason, which cannot be said for almost every other animal? Has he intelligence? So has every other animal; for all purposes useful to its condition. It is the wants, the sensations of the animal, that creates the reason and accomplishes the useful purposes, and not any inherent superiority or capacity. If man has more of reason, than any other animal, it is only where he has greater wants than that animal: and the wants generated by education do not alter the argument. Can man subject other animals to his purposes? Is he not also subjected to the purposes of some few of the more cunning of those with whom he associates? Can he devour other animals? Cannot they devour him, if the opportunity offers? If they are food for him, he is also food for them: and all that Paley's great intelligent contriver has done, has been, to contrive them as food for one another: each dying identity nourishing those which live! Surely, there can be nothing deserving the denomination of wisdom, in the purpose of such a contrivance! If the cries of insects could reach our ears, we should hear nothing but one incessant expression of agony!

Doubtless, Sir, you have picked the bones of many a fowl, broken many an egg, devoured many a fish, and swallowed many a bullock, hog, and sheep; but think you, that they were contrived to be your food? Supposing, that you had been drowned at sea, at any given period of your life, and some of those fishes which you have eaten had fed upon your body; how then would the case have stood, as to their being contrived to be your food? Might we not have said in such a case, that the great intelligent contriver had contrived you as food for those fishes? Is not the case as good on the one side, as on the other? Is it not clear, that we exist only to die, to be food for, and to make way for new identities? Is not this the clear and only purpose of all vegetable and animal matter? I see it to be so, and am happy in the conviction. If you escape the devouring jaws of the fishes, and receive a Christian burial, you have no further consolation, than that your rotting body will generate its own devourers, in the character of worms or maggots. There is no escaping from this disgusting idea; but in the

alternative of a funeral pile: and give me a funeral pile, in idea, before a Christian burial.

It is not only on this planet, that your, or Paley's, industrious intelligent contriver has to employ itself—it must be on every other planet at the same time. Now, ponder here, and ask yourself, if you can conceive the existence of intelligence separate from one of those organizations by which you see it produced. Whatever you may conceit, or assert, I know the impossibility of the belief of such a notion, when fairly reasoned upon: and knowing this, I would know from you, Paley being dead, how one animated being can be every where present, and contrive all the contrivances that are contrived?

I do not ask you to consider what is *infinity*, or what is a *universe*, they are idle and senseless words, a proof of a degree of ignorance; but I ask you to contemplate the system of solar systems, which the eye alone, unaided by the telescope, can reach. I ask you to contemplate but one of those systems, that which we inhabit. I ask you to contemplate but one planet of this system, that on which we live: consider its hugeness! its inconceivable bulk! and its inconceivable distance from the sun, or even from its own satellite the moon! I ask you to contemplate but this one planet, this mere grain of sand, when compared with those visible to the eye; and consider, if any thing which you know of the powers of intelligence can controul it. On this planet, you see the highest degree of intelligence, or man, but a mere ephemeral creature; born in a morning; the sport of storms through a day; and dead at night. This is all that can be said of the highest known degree of intelligence! And is it not a mockery; is it not profaneness; is it not impiety; or is it ignorance alone, that makes this ephemeral principle to be a creator of all that we know to have existed, to exist, or to be about to exist?

Look and consider if the Deity pervades all space; as some Theists preach, can that *all* be intelligent and act every where as an individual being? If it pervades all space and be intelligent, what hope have you, as an identity, of immortality? If it pervades all space, where is your heaven, in which you talk of being located with your idol God? Can it be at the same time located and extended to all locations? If you have the capacity to think seriously, and you exhibit a contour of that kind, you must see, that nothing but ridicule will attach to any and every notion of an intelligent creator of all things.

This is sermon enough to prove my first text, "*that there is no such an intelligent God in existence as any man has preached.*"

2. That the Jews had no ancestors inhabiting Judea, or the coast of Syria, or Palestine, or by whatever other name that district, or the whole of Asia Minor, might have been called, before the Babylonian Colonization under the authority of Cyrus, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

As far as Judaism or Christianity is concerned, this is a momentous question; but in any other sense, it is a matter of no consequence.

Having been led to the conviction, by both external and internal evidence, that the books of the Old Testament were compiled about the time, and for the purpose, of that colonization, I have been also led to enquire, what connection there existed between a nation of Israelites and a nation of Jews. I have endeavoured to trace the Jews as a nation prior to their residence at Babylon. But in this I have failed at every point. I find, that the spot of land which we now call Palestine, or the Holy Land, and which was formerly called Judea, was environed on three sides, by the Egyptians, the Phenicians, and the Grecians, the Mediterranean Sea intervening as a separation from the latter. Of Egypt, of Phenicia, and of Greece, we have clear histories, and an account of an intercourse between them as neighbours; but in all your Greek authors, from Homer and Hesiod to Herodotus, can you find the mention of such a people as Israelites or Jews, or of such a land as Judea, or of such a city as Jerusalem? In any history of Phenicia, do you find, that they had such neighbours as Israelites or Jews; and bear in mind, that, if the latter existed there as a nation, prior to the Babylonian Colonization, they must have been in the same relation as neighbours, as the people of Devon to the people of Dorset. In any ancient history of Egypt, separate from the Jewish compilation, do you find any mention of such a people as Israelites or Jews existing prior to the colonization in question? Do you find the mention of such a people as Israelites or Jews, or of such a city as Jerusalem, in any ancient author who wrote before the colonization in question? If you do not, what is the inference; but the Jews had no ancestors inhabiting the coast of Syria prior to that colonization by Cyrus? We have as regular and as correct a history of them as of any other people of that neighbourhood, since that colonization; but there is not a

trace of them of an earlier date. If there be, I here expose myself to your correction.

The grand inference to be drawn from this fact is, that the first fourteen books are fabulous, as far as they are made to apply to a people inhabiting what is now called Palestine, or any part of that neighbourhood: and weight is hereby given to the theory, that all the religions of Asia have emanated from a personification of the planets and the founding of allegories thereupon. Here also the foundation of the religion of the Jews is removed, and with it, that of Christianity.

My third and last text is, that no such a person as the Jesus Christ of the New Testament existed in Judea or elsewhere.

My objections are founded upon the same ground as those with respect to the prior existence of the Jews in Judea: that there is no evidence of the existence of such a sect as Christians, or of such a religion as Christianity, within what we now call the first century; and that there is negative evidence against the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ at the time and place stated.

The earliest authenticated document of the existence of such a sect as Christians is, the letter of Pliny, whilst Proconsul in Bythinia, to Trajan. Pliny found a sect called Christians in Asia Minor, in or about the year 110, which he did not find at Rome, nor in any of the European Provinces. But whether they had existed one year, or ten years before that time, there is not a shade of evidence. Here then we must stop. After this time, or about twenty years after, Tacitus mentions the existence of the Christian Religion, and that it had then reached Rome; and soon after him, Suetonius makes mention of the same as a new sect. In addition to these evidently impartial authorities, we have Christian authorities of or near the same date with the two latter historians; but not one so early as the letter of Pliny to Trajan. These are decisive proofs, that the Christian Religion did not exist so as to excite public notice within the first century as stated in the books of the New Testament.

The negative evidences are, that no historian, who wrote within the first century, has mentioned such a person as Jesus Christ, or such a sect as Christians. There were three persons, who lived towards the close of this century, who could not have failed to notice the person of Jesus Christ, and the sect of Christians, were the contents of the Gospels

and of the "Acts of the Apostles" authentic—Philo, Josephus and Pliny the Elder. The mention of such circumstances would have been within the means, as it was precisely within the province, of these writers, had such things happened as Christianity has fabled of Jesus Christ and his Disciples.

Throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, there is no allusion to any particular known Gospel, nor to any Emperor or person in authority at the time at which they were written, which is a proof that, with the writer or writers, neither of the Gospels now at the head of the book then existed, so as to obtain authority, or as a guidance; nor is there any mention of time or place at which Jesus Christ was crucified. The subject of the crucifixion is treated just as a worshipper of Prometheus might have treated of his crucifixion. And, by the way, I will mention, that the pretended prophecy in the 53rd chapter of Josiah will apply as well to the fable of Prometheus as to the fable of Jesus Christ.

In the Epistles, there is no reference to the pretended sayings of Jesus Christ, which are now introduced into the Gospels, nor any similarity of the doctrine, though there is continual reference to the Old Testament, which is another proof, that the Epistles were among the first written documents possessed by the Christian Churches, and that the Gospels were compiled after the Christians had gained a considerable footing and become numerous.

In speaking of Christian Churches, I must not be understood to hold the idea of such a Church as that of England Scotland or Ireland, with its million sterling as an income. What were first called Christian Churches had a near resemblance to the followers of Johanna Southcote at this time. Meetings in different houses, and quarrels about the propriety of circumcision! Christianity now seems likely to be about to end precisely as it began, among the most illiterate and most superstitious part of the Community. Peter was for circumcision, and Paul against it: and such is the present state of the followers of Johanna. Peter had cunning enough to see, that the rite would become a great obstacle to his progress among the Gentiles; and as for the Jews, though Mr. Sumner says, that the first Christians were converted Jews, I am of opinion, that it will be difficult to offer an authentic proof of a single Jew having become a Christian at its origin, or until within the last few years, that a few profligates have been enticed with bribes and the prospect of collecting large sums of money from the

ever credulous and tricked Christians! I would ask Mr. Sumner to give me an authenticated case of a single Jew convert within the first three hundred years. I know that subsequent persecutions, the Inquisition for instance, have made many Jews prefer the Baptism and the name of Christian, to torture and premature death; whilst others have resisted all menace, and have died as steadfast as any Christian Martyrs; but this will not now bear to be called conversion.

The very name of this Jesus Christ is enough to settle the question of its being a mere fable or allegory.

Jesus signifies *Messiah* or *Saviour*; and *Christ* signifies *annointed*, or the adopted as a leader, or who has approved himself as a liberator or saviour to a people: so that, in fact, the word *Christ* is but a mere repetition of the word *Jesus*. It may be correctly translated from the original as *Saviour-Saviour*, or in modern phrase as *General-General*. The word *Christ* is wholly Greek, and is of itself, a proof, that the scheme of Christianity was not begun by Jews. *Christ* being a Greek word, its derivations *Christian* and *Christianity* must be the same; and we have the confession, in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, written by a Greek, and dedicated or addressed to Theophilus, the Greek Bishop of Antioch, about the middle of the second century, that the new sect received the denomination of Christians in Antioch. When Cicero travelled in Greece, he found inscriptions on monuments to many different Christs*.

This book, *the Acts of the Apostles*, forms another proof, that Christianity did not begin as soon as is now pretended. Taking the assertion, that it began before the year 40, we have evidence, that these *Acts of the Apostles* were not written until more than a hundred years after that time.

That evidence consists in the fact of its being addressed to Theophilus, whom Lardner allows not to have been Bishop of Antioch until after the middle of the second century. Considering the want of public records among a new sect of that kind, this circumstance affords a proof, that these pretended *Acts of the Apostles* are at best nothing more than a *tradition*, and, at least, more like *fable*, than any thing else.

A similar circumstance is deduced from the consideration, that the writer of *the Acts of the Apostles* is the writer of the third, or Luke's Gospel, and that this Greek is the only

* A surname which the Jews would not have given to Jesus or to their Messiah.

one that gives us any date as to the birth and parentage of Jesus. For the two first chapters of Matthew's Gospel are proved by the Unitarians to be a spurious interpolation upon the original. Here then we have a proof, that out of all the existing Christian writings, the only one that gives any date to the birth of Jesus Christ, is this one which was evidently written at Antioch, a Greek City, about the middle of the second century: or more than one hundred years after the dates of the matters it relates. It was in the neighbourhood of this same Greek City, that Pliny first found the sect of Christians, in the early part of the second century. Coupling this circumstance with the fact, that Luke, writing some thirty or forty year's after, says, at the commencement of his Gospel, that he has "had a perfect understanding of all things (concerning Christianity) from the first," I find all the proof, that my mind requires, that Christianity began with the *second* instead of the *first* century, and that Antioch, not Jerusalem, was the seat of its birth; that it is of Grecian, and not of Jewish origin. The septuagint translation of the Jewish Scriptures clearly accounts for the acquaintance of the Grecians with them.

Why was it dated at Jerusalem, it may be asked. Because, Jerusalem and Judea had just been so desolated by the Romans, as to leave no chance of authentic contradiction. No person about to impose a fable upon his neighbours would lay the scene of his plot on the spot on which they lived, as every one would be able to contradict him; but if laid a hundred miles off, in a foreign country desolated by war, so destructive as were the wars of Asia, and a hundred years after date, there was not the least fear of contradiction; for who, among such an ignorant rabble, as first embraced Christianity, should contradict? The existence of Jesus never seems to have been disputed, by what we read in Origen Contra Celsus, and even the Jews scattered in the Roman Provinces, as appears by their Toldoth Jesu, or the Gospel of the Jews, never doubted the existence of a man, whose chief merit was made to consist in having passed the most low of lives as a beggar, and the most ignominious of deaths as a malefactor nailed to the cross. These degradations, so common in that day, were not matters to be questioned; but ignorant and superstitious as were the people of that day, the pretended miracles, and Godhead, and Resurrection, of Jesus, were treated with the most inflexible contempt, by all but the mere dregs of the populace,

for near two centuries at least, for one century after their actual propagation.

There is another piece of internal evidence against Christianity to be found at the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, verses 25 and 26, as follows: "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel*, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, *according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began*, But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God *only wise*, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever, Amen." I will couple with these verses the 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of the 1st Chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet be pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Here is a statement that is wholly destructive of Christianity as now preached! Here is an assertion by the chief of the Apostles, that, in his time, there was no written Gospel, and that if any should be written, the writer ought to be accursed! It is evident, that this Paul did not preach from a written Gospel, for, he says, that, "the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, *neither was I taught it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." We are elsewhere told, and it is no where contradicted, that this Paul was not the first promulgator of Christianity, not one of the pretended disciples of Jesus Christ, not a witness of his pretended life and actions. Here then, we can well play off Paul against Peter. Paul rejects all that Peter or any other apostle preached of Jesus Christ! He would not warrant a word of it, and heaps curses on all

* Where is that Gospel? What is it?

who have a Gospel other than his and all who receive any other. Here is a dilemma for the conscientious Christian, and I do hope and believe there are, ignorantly, such.

This Epistle of Paul to the Galatians was not written immediately after his conversion, but we may see by dates in the first and second chapter, that it was full seventeen years after that alleged conversion: and for aught that appears to the contrary, it might have been twice seventeen years. Here is Paul after having preached upwards of seventeen years ignorant of any written Gospel; or if ignorant cursing them! Here is Paul declaring, that he knows nothing true of Jesus Christ, but that which Jesus Christ has revealed to him whom he never saw! Here is Paul declaring, at the conclusion of his Epistle to the Romans, that his revelation has been a mystery kept secret since the world began, and now first preached by him! This is a robbing of Peter to pay Paul with a vengeance!

But what *mystery* was it kept secret since the world began? This has some meaning! We read of the Esoteric Doctrines of the Egyptian Priests; we read of the Eleusinian mysteries; we read of the Bacchanal Orgies, and of the mysteries of almost every kind of religion, and though St. Paul here declares, that he reveals all these mysteries, our modern Priests have invented a new batch for us, and would persuade us that they are something super-human! No! no! they are not super-human, I will reveal, I will humanize all these mysteries! I will beat St. Paul, even St. John at revelation! You, Mr. Wollaston, will find this letter no very contemptible revelation; and I beg of you to reveal it to Dr. England and to the Bishop of London! I do not wish to give you a further opportunity to report to Mr. Peel that I seek to corrupt all your prisoners; but pray, reveal this letter to the Goaler and report it to Mr. Peel. I pray, I petition, you to do so.

I was some time back visited by a Mr. Trelevan, lately established in Dorchester as a Unitarian Preacher, and since that in Lynn, Norfolk. He has been both an able and a popular preacher in that sect; but, I believe, has the misfortune for himself to have ruined his health by intoxicating liquors. In the course of conversation, and hearing me frankly avow my ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Ghost, and of all such nonsense, he observed, that he had been certainly a preacher of Jesus Christ and Christianity; but that he believed in no other Christianity than that which was as old as the creation; explaining it to be a sum-

mary of moral duties. I told him, that I was a Christian of that kind, but that I had evidence against the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ. To my great astonishment, he answered with a great deal of Emphasis: "SIR! THERE IS INTERNAL EVIDENCE, IN THE EPISTLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, THAT NO SUCH PERSON AS JESUS CHRIST EVER EXISTED!" I confessed, that I had not detected it, nor did he explain; but I now think, that I have detected it and reveal it to you, Mr. Wollaston. Mr. Treleven further assured me, that all the intelligent Unitarians are precisely of my opinions; and confessed what I have asserted and do still hold; that their pretended Christianity is a mere cloak against the *penal laws* for, what is ignorantly and vulgarly complained of as, *blasphemy*.

That is sermon enough about Jesus Christ and Christianity, to prove the correctness of my text; so I will conclude with a few general observations on Mr. Sumner's book; first thanking you for giving me so good an excuse to address to you this letter.

The title of this book is the "Evidence of Christianity, derived from its nature and reception."

As to its *nature*, I would observe, that though a new version of an old fable, it has nothing original, but is a mere copy from the fable of Prometheus crucified; and if the memory of my school hours be correct, I rather think, that Ovid describes a sort of anniversary of the death of Bacchus, in a strain as nearly Christian, as any two versions of the same tale can be expected to be. Prometheus, Hercules, Bacchus, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Osiris, Apollo, Thamuz, Chreeshna and Jesus Christ, with fifty other names, are but so many astronomical names of our solar planet, and the motions of the earth in relation to it, with their effects, allegorically personified. Different nations have worshipped the sun under different names, and with different mysteries, rites and ceremonies, verifying what St. Paul says in the conclusion of his Epistle to the Romans, that it has been *a matter kept secret since the world began*, which he to establish a new sect, pretends to reveal, and only pretends.

It is matter altogether rational, to suppose, that illiterate races of mankind should worship the sun, as the first and most powerful object that operated upon their senses; from which they evidently derived their being and their sustenance. It is rational, to suppose, that they should lament his apparent motions, and occasional absence from their view, and

that they should express their lamentations at his absence, and their rejoicings at his return, in personified figures, which were the bounds of their knowledge, witness the account of the lamentations and rejoicings about Thamuz in your Bible. The mass of Christians, in the present day, are equally illiterate, and equally idolatrous. They ignorantly conclude, that all they see is regulated by beings like themselves; and all their religious feelings are nothing more than were felt by the more early idolators. In point of knowledge and civilization, the Christians are not a jot before the idolators of five or ten thousand years ago—in fact, they have but corrupted themselves, by corrupting the mythologies, the rites, ceremonies, and mysteries of former idolators.

The tragedy of Prometheus by Eschylus is a complete epitome of the Christian Religion. And the history of Christianity, even the Epistles of the New Testament, assure us, that it began with all sorts of mysteries, bacchanal orgies, agapæ or love feasts, like those observed by the more lewd worshippers of Venus: and Gibbon relates a rumour that, at one of these horrid meetings, *a new born infant was destroyed, and its quivering limbs devoured by those horrid fanatics, as a type of the sacrifice of the lamb that taketh away the sins of the world!* To say precisely how, where, and when Christianity began, cannot be done; but that it is an emanation from such horrid fanaticism as here described, admits not of question. Antioch, where we have the first trace of it, was singularly debauched in its inhabitants: and it is always from these hot-beds of vice that new superstitions arise. In the time of Tacitus, the Christian superstition was viewed by the more virtuous part of the Romans as *execrable*: his memorable sentence on that head is, doubtless, familiar to both your eyes and ears.

The *nature* of the Christian Religion explains its *reception*, that it began among the most ignorant of mankind, and went on assuming new forms, to suit all new comers. It has not been alike in any place, in any two centuries that it has existed; and wherever there be no establishment so powerful as to punish and destroy heretics, we shall find all those deviations and new systems which have disgraced this country back to the time of the so-called Reformation.

As to its having been made to suit the Jewish Scriptures, the pretended prophecies, &c., nothing was more easy. Those Scriptures were at that time a species of novelty among the Greeks, and the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans made that novelty every where a matter of interest.

Complete parallels of the feats of Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus Christ, may be drawn from the Bible; the tale of one evidently being the foundation of that of the others. It is much more easy, we writers know well, to draw a parallel, than to write an original piece: and as to what Mr. Sumner has said about the Gospels being superior pieces of writing, above the abilities of ordinary men, it only proves, that he is not an impartial, but a bad judge. There was more mental labour required to compile Mr. Sumner's book, than all four of the Gospels: and I acknowledge to you and to him, that there is more ability exhibited in his book, than in those Gospels: though the same sort of argument might be carried on for the reality and truth of the contents of one of Sir Walter Scott's Novels, as his for one or all of the Gospels.

This, my revelation to you, being now concluded, I have merely to request, that, when Mr. Wood, the Chaplain, Dr. England and Mr. Colson, the Clerical Visiting Magistrates, Mr. Richman, the Dorchester Vicar of Trinity Parish, Mr. Davis, the Vicar of Cerne, the Bishop of London, or any other, or all of the Priests in the country, *complain to you of my obstinacy and lament my infidelity*, you will be so good to ask them, why they cannot say a word to me, or before me, in defence of Christianity; or why they cannot write a little book about the size of this letter, to refute what I advance against them. Do, pray, ask them, if they cannot prove the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ: do, pray, ask some Jew, or Christian Jew, if he cannot trace his Jewish ancestors beyond the Babylonian Colonization at Jerusalem:—do, pray, ask some of the most clever of those who preach an intelligent personified God, in the image of man, if they cannot maintain such a doctrine against what I have here advanced by way of revelation to you. If you will *honestly* do all these things; you will come and shake hands with me, and beg my pardon for your past conduct towards me, as one of the Visiting Magistrates of Dorchester Gaol. Until then, I remain, with feelings of contempt for you, and such as you, priests, magistrates, and all.

RICHARD CARLILE.

ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY, OR FIRST POWER.

Being No. 2 of a series of Essays, investigating the dogmas of religion by the light of medical science, by R. T. Webb, Esq. author of "A Manuel of Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery, for the use of Families and Officers. Dedicated to His Majesty." "The Phrenologist, a Farce, with Songs," &c. &c.

THERE are three hypotheses to account for the existence of the world. The most improbable, on which the Christian, and all other religions, are founded, is most generally believed, that God, a being who must have existed from all eternity, in infinite space, took it into its head to make little balls of matter, and set them rolling round each other yesterday! The other hypotheses are, that the world has existed from all eternity as we see it, or that eternal matter has at some time accidentally (that is, without design) fallen into the state we see it. These opinions I shall investigate at a future time; but as Christianity is founded on the first, I shall, for the present, grant the existence of a God, a world maker, and proceed to investigate his *real* attributes, and shew the falsity of all those, Christianity and priestcraft have invested him with.

"GOD IS OMNIPOTENT." This is false. The title has been given him, by wise men, on account of the imperfection of language, to denote the greatest degree of known or possible power; and, by priests of all ages and nations to excite fear and wonder, in the child of ignorance and barbarity, and to encrease their especial profits. A little reflection will shew, that there can be no such thing as omnipotence. I either exist, or I do not: the Deity cannot make me exist, and not exist at the same time. A pen is either straight or crooked; God cannot make it both at the same time. Space is either infinite, or it is not; (if it be finite, what forms the boundary? and what is *beyond* that boundary?) if it is infinite, as all reasonable men believe, the Deity cannot measure it. Infinity, and many properties of matter are destructive of omnipotence. It may be contended, that God made matter with those properties; if we grant this, it only proves that he has created a power that limits

his own. But the *creation* of matter cannot be proved, and ought not to be assumed: it is absolutely inconceivable. Take a stone in your hand, and endeavour to imagine, it was once *nothing*; reduce it to *nothing* again! Make this "great globe itself vanish like the baseless fabrick of a vision, and leave not a wreck behind." I do not say the thing is impossible, for I cannot prove it to be so; but no man capable of thinking can believe it. Be it so, or not; even with Christians I stand on sure ground in denying the creation of matter; for the Bible does not say God created the world; but that he arranged a chaos; "the earth was void, and without form, and darkness was on the face of the deep:" then follows the order in which the *elements* (FOUR! what excellent chemists they were!) were separated from each other. Man was made of something—the *dust of the earth*, par mobile fratrum, and woman was made of a man's rib; though how dust was polished into eyes, or a rib increased to a woman, "deponent saith not." Ought not the priests to finish the story, for the millions they receive? and not give us such tales as these, flat stale and unprofitable.

The Bible more directly supports me in denying the omnipotence of God; for it says, he commanded man not to eat of a certain tree, but the serpent, that is the Devil, persuaded him to disobey, and displease his maker. Here the Deity has created a power he could not controul; for he either wished man to eat or not; if he wished him to eat, it was absurd to command him not to do so; and if he wished him not to eat, the Devil, in being able to persuade him to eat, was more powerful than God. And, it is obvious, a power cannot be omnipotent when a greater exists. The Devil is, according to the accounts of the Bible and of the clergy, still possessed of his power, notwithstanding an omnipotent God's sacrifice of his only son to appease his own wrath, and to defeat the Devil's malice; who yet goes about, as a Methodist Parson charitably told me, like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, (and he will have you!) tempting men to sin, and damning them for it, unless they *repent* and BELIEVE! (Priests, like the Devil, must shew the cloven foot) thus making a condition with God, or God making one with him; either case crippling the power, and, consequently, destroying the omnipotence of the Deity.

To Sceptics I must apologize for this Essay; but it is a necessary part of the series I am writing; because, Christians say, every thing is possible to God. In future Essays, I shall farther consider the power of God in connection with

his wisdom and goodness, for they are nearly allied, and shew that he has no more pretention to those attributes than to omnipotence.

ON THE DELUGE.

Being No. 3 of a series of Essays; &c. &c.

I HAVE not a Bible at hand, but I think it accounts for the deluge by saying, "the heavens were opened and it rained forty days and forty nights," and that "the fountains of the deep were broken up." The ancients perceived undoubted traces of the sea having covered the highest mountains, and endeavoured to account for the fact that excited their wonder. But when reason was in its infancy, it was necessary to use the name of God to inspire belief in the minds of weak, ignorant, and superstitious men. This was the more necessary, as the philosophers of those days were scarcely less ignorant than their disciples. Moses, or whoever had the *honour!* of writing the account of the deluge, is an example of the truth of this observation. He used the name of God to give authority and currency to the most palpable error, that even thus supported by superstition could only pass for truth with the most thoughtless of mankind. If it had rained until this day, it would not have raised the water on the whole earth one inch. It is well known to scientific, and indeed to most men in Europe, that every drop of rain that falls from the clouds must have been previously raised from the earth in the form of vapour. Evaporation is continually going on from seas, rivers, and all places containing water; sometimes so rapidly and extensively as to be perceptible to the eye. The water thus raised forms clouds, which, being condensed by cold in the atmosphere, falls to the earth in the form of rain. It is obvious, therefore, if this alternate evaporation and condensation were to continue for ever, it could not encrease the quantity, or raise the height of the water on the whole earth one inch. What a notion the *inspired* writer must have of the world, to suppose "the heavens were opened," as if an immense reservoir of water were above our heads, being "part and parcel" of, or forming a cold bath barrier to, heaven! What a comfortable prospect for saints in cold weather!

With regard to the fountains of the deep being broken up,

I can only understand, that water rose *against gravity* from the internal parts of the earth forming a canopy, or large pie-crust of salt water, propped up by the VACUUM that must of course be formed below, and by mountain tops, instead of beef steaks and potatoes!! The hypothesis is false on the face of it; and yet for false philosophy like this, under the title of the word of God, we must pay a tax that would redeem the national debt in less than thirty years, by continually applying the interest of the redeemed debt to the redemption of more.

I have no means of knowing whether the public in general be interested in the opinion of Geologists at present on this subject; but I may, in brief, observe that they are divided into two sects. The Platonists, who believe, that continents are thrown up by the force of internal fires, and probably occasioned by water gaining access to the metallic bases of the alkalies and earths. And the Wermerians, (from the name of their founder) who believe, that the earth was originally covered with water, which retired, from the giving way, in part, of the earth that supported it. Both causes have been known to act in small spaces; but the grand change has, no doubt, been gradually effected in the course of ages. How can we suppose the vast continents and mountains of America and Asia suddenly thrown up from the bottom of the sea?

To give the Devil his due, I may here observe, that Parson Irving has verified the adage, that children and fools speak the truth, when he said, "all the literary and scientific men of the day are infidels." How can they be otherwise? I know not one who will say, "on my honor, as a gentlemen, I believe in Christianity." I know not one who does not avow the contrary, to his confidential friends!

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN A DOCTOR OF,
MEDICINE AND A UNITARIAN PREACHER,
BOTH OF DUNDEE.

(Continued from page 288.)

PRIEST TO THE DOCTOR.

YOUR last letter truly astonished me. I was not a little surprised to find you accusing me of studiously avoiding to

come to the point. Surely, when you wrote such an accusation, you must have forgotten the contents of my last letter. In that letter, I entered into a fair investigation of the merits of all the objections you brought forward against Christianity; and though I may not have answered them to your satisfaction, you might at least have given me the credit of attending to them.

I would not be afraid of the judgment of an unprejudiced man, if our correspondence were submitted to his scrutiny, I would not be afraid to submit to the determination of such a man the questions "who has written, in the correspondence, which has taken place, with the greater dogmatism?" and "who has reasoned with the greater fairness?"

But is our correspondence a controversy? Is it a battle? I hope not. When I wrote my remarks on the tract of Carlile, which you lent me, I wrote them not as a controversialist, but with the friendly design of leading you to reflect more seriously than you seem to have done on the evidences of Christianity. I was cheered on to undergo the risk of the labour of a lengthened discussion with you, by the consideration that I might be of service to you, by leading you to reverence the character and the authority of Jesus, and if I had believed that your correspondence would be dictated not by a love of truth, but by a love of victory, you would not have been troubled with one single line from my pen. But let me not yet impute such a motive to you, notwithstanding that what I have already perused of your writings would excite considerable suspicions to this effect. Let me have the charity that "hopeth all things," and not condemn till I have a stronger evidence still.

You recur to the old objection concerning the sun, and you argue that if the diurnal motion of the earth had ceased, this event would have produced a derangement in our globe that would have overwhelmed the land with water, and convulsed in ruin every city and habitable spot in the world. Now, if it be admitted, that the miracle actually took place, I should like to see your demonstration, that the same power which performed the miracle could not prevent this calamitous consequences. If it be admitted that the deity saw it proper to perform the miracle, he would see it equally proper to prevent these calamitous consequences; and, therefore, I should like to see your demonstration that he could not prevent them. Invoke to your aid then all the philosophers. You may except however the shades of Sir Isaac Newton and the truly honourable Mr. Boyle. They stu-

died what you call superstition as assiduously as they did science.

You have "studiously avoided" in your reply on this subject, what I said on it in my last letter. I could submit, I think, what I have said there on the subject to the judgment of the unprejudiced.

You say in reply to what I have said on the conduct of the Israelites to the Cananites, that I must have strange ideas of the divine being. But this, Doctor, is replying indeed to what I have said on the subject; but it is not refuting it.

I told you, you would laugh at the balloon. Now, do you really think, Doctor, that when I compared the doubts of a man respecting the ascension of a balloon to the doubts of an unbeliever respecting the ascension of Jesus, I believed that Jesus ascended by means of the same substance by which a balloon ascended? You seem to think so. All that I intended by the comparison was simply this, that the narrative of Sadler's ascension might have been as plausibly doubted by one who had never heard of such an event, as that of the ascension of Jesus can be by an unbeliever.

You proceed to ask me where heaven is? But I have nothing to do with that question¹. The question is "was Jesus seen to ascend from his disciples?" I have nothing to do with the question "Where did he go?" What you say about his travelling through space with his body full of wounds is truly lamentable. Does it follow that because when Thomas felt his body there were the marks of wounds upon it, (not wounds mind you, but the marks of wounds) he still retained these marks when he ascended².

You have laid aside, I see, the "rams horns," but you still laugh at the jubilee trumpets. However, you do not laugh at the real fact, but a foolery; for which your own imagination only is responsible. According to your representation, the sound of the trumpets beat down the walls of Jericho. Does the Old Testament say so? Did I say so? Is the circumstance of the downfall of the walls of Jericho following the sound of the trumpets, and the circumstance of

¹ That and the word *God* is the all in all of superstition. There is the error of all. There is no God—no heaven. Who says nay, and saying, proves it?

R. C.

² Wounds heals, and the flesh grows together again. But Jesus is made to say to Thomas—Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side!

R. C.

the downfall being caused by the sound, one and the same thing? What you say relative to mistranslation is also lamentable. You would not surely have every translator and every printer inspired. Must every transcriber, every translator, and every printer be inspired to prevent the objections of unbelievers³. I am sure, Doctor, that when you think at your leisure on your assertion that a mistranslation is sufficient to invalidate the whole story, you will wonder at it.

You still talk with the "determined confidence" of which you accuse me on the subject of the miraculous conception. Yet while you talk on that subject in a strain altogether unworthy of an enquirer, you have not refuted what I advanced. I may therefore reasonably save myself the trouble of animadverting farther at present on your highly indecent treatment of it.

You assert that I have not brought forward one witness to attest the fact of the ascension of Jesus. In your last letter you admitted that Mark and Luke asserted the ascension of Jesus. I proved also that the Apostle Paul asserts it. That these three have asserted the fact you do not deny. Now if Jesus had not really ascended from his disciples, is it conceivable that these writers could have asserted it without the fear of contradiction.

You think my reference to John chap. xx. ver. 17, very weak. Now I did not refer to this passage as a proof that John saw Jesus ascending from his disciples, but as a proof that he believed that Jesus ascended. But will you prove to me that he did not believe this on sufficient evidence. I think such a passage a stronger proof of the fact than a direct and express assertion of it. No forger designing to relate the ascension of Jesus, would have thought of the round about process of putting an indirect allusion to it in the mouth of Jesus, when speaking to Mary Magdalene, but he would have said at once that he saw the event.

You insinuate that the conduct of Mary was suspicious. Where did you learn this? Such an insinuation is utterly unworthy of you. You say that when I claim assistance from Peter, I unhappily go to the wrong book—namely the book of the Acts. But when you produce arguments to prove it likely, that Luke would put declarations of the exaltation of

³ How else are we to distinguish the divine inspiration from the human error?

Jesus in the mouth of Peter without authority, I will admit that I have gone to the wrong book ⁴.

Unsuccessful in your last letter, in your endeavour to prove a contradiction between Mark and Luke, you now try to prove one between Matthew and Luke. Matthew says, (you argue) that Jesus commanded his disciples to meet him in Galilee, and Luke in the Acts says, that he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, and continues in his Gospel to assert that Jesus led them out as far as Bethany. Now, Sir, when Jesus commanded his disciples to remain in Jerusalem, *i. e.* to reside in it, or to make it their place of residence, it was just before he led them out to Bethany, situated a short distance from Jerusalem. In Luke chap. xxiv. ver. 49, we read "and behold I send the promise of my father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endowed with power from on high." Then in verse 50, we read that he led them out as far as Bethany, and in verse 52, that when Jesus had ascended they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy," to the place where Jesus commanded them to reside, till the fulfillment of the promise of his father. Where the contradiction then? They had been in Galilee before they were commanded to reside in Jerusalem, and therefore the command to go to Galilee, and the command to reside in Jerusalem after they had been in Galilee, are not contradictory.

If I were disposed to assume the air of a dogmatist, I might do it with some reason in my treatment of the following specimen of reasoning: I allude to your assertion, that with regard to the resurrection, I am still deficient in what should constitute the principal proof, namely, men who saw Jesus in the sepulchre, and also saw him arise. You surely do not doubt that Jesus was crucified⁵, that Jesus died, and you will also not doubt that it is as difficult to resuscitate a dead man as a buried man. The question, therefore, whether he was seen laid in a sepulchre is a secondary question. But if this secondary question is not to be determined by the authority of Matthew and Luke, by whose authority will you have it determined?

When you demand that witnesses should be produced,

⁴ Peter is nowhere made a witness of the ascension of Jesus when speaking for himself.

R. C.

⁵ Yes, the Doctor has expressed his disbelief of such a man as Jesus in toto.

R. C.

that beheld Jesus in the act of rising from the tomb, you make a very strange demand. You might as well ask me to produce witnesses who beheld the birth of Jesus, in order to prove his existence, as ask me to produce witnesses who beheld his resurrection, in order to prove that he was alive after he was dead. This is the question, Doctor, "was Jesus seen alive after being dead?" and not "did any one see him in the act of rising from the dead⁶?"

You next refer to Matthew and Mark's account of what was seen in the interior of the sepulchre; as we are told by John, that the one angel stood where the feet of Jesus lay, and that the other stood where his head lay; the one angel would naturally be seen before the other, and though Mark says that an angel was seen, he does not say that *only one* angel was seen. He says, that they saw a young man at the right side, now as it was to this young man that their attention was first directed, and principally directed, Mark mentions him in particular. If Peter and John saw only the clothes lying, this circumstance proves nothing more than that the angels had departed before they arrived at the sepulchre. You, yourself, lay no stress on the objection.

You say that my remarks on the expression three days, and three nights are trifling. Well, but you have not proved them so. I get assertion in reply to them, but they are not refuted by you.

Yours, &c.

NOTE FROM THE PRIEST TO THE DOCTOR.

D. L., sends to Dr. — with his best wishes for his welfare, a reply to his last letter. He conjures him again to inquire into the evidences of religion, without reference to any man or to any party. He entreats him not to treat the subject as a disputant but as an humble and diffident enquirer. He beseeches him to consider that he may be wrong, and from this consideration not to speak on Christianity so vainly as he does: and he desires Dr. — to believe him his well wisher—notwithstanding the ardour with which he has written to him. It is not more than ardour, it is not wrath, he has not used one single harsh expression.

⁶ The question is, did he exist! Is he more than a fabled character?

DOCTOR IN LONDON, TO THE PRIEST IN DUNDEE.

DEAR SIR,

London, June 15, 1824.

YOUR late epistle only reached me the other day, and as I feel anxious to reply to it, I now sit down to do so, animated by the purest desire of truth.

The insinuation of my coming forward in this correspondence with no other wish but to enjoy the love of victory, is what I altogether disclaim. It is a gratification which, certainly, I had not in view; but even granting that I was under the dominion of such a feeling, the cause which I espouse being of that kind, which embraces every thing that is connected with the dignity of the human mind, will make the motive in place of being condemned, be deemed by many truly laudable and praiseworthy. In the story of La Roche, drawn by the elegant Mackenzie, we have the character of David Hume extolled on account of being free from the spirit of *dogmatism*. Upon this occasion it would appear that Hume did not wish to enforce his opinions. In his writings, however, he possesses a great deal of energy; but he is not on this account charged with writing for no other view than to gratify the love of triumph, and if, in my humble exertions, I have written with some degree of confidence, it is certainly very unfair to impute to me any such motive.

In much that I have contended for during our epistolary correspondence, I have, I confess, felt an honest pride in the avowal of opinions that cannot be easily overthrown: and when I behold nothing brought forward to oppose them, but the most flimsy observations, I own, I experience the inward satisfaction that never fails to be the result of a deep moral feeling which inherits the breast of every one, who wishes to see destroyed, the baneful effects of Religion, a spectre, which according to the philosophic Dupuis, "seizeth upon man in his cradle, accompanieth him during his whole existence, and more frighful in its threats than consoling in its promises, followeth him to his very tomb." Surrounded by every thing dark and mystical, we can consider a religionist in no other view than a being lost to the dictates of reason, continually crouching under the servile yoke of Priests, making a sacrifice of his judgment to that bugbear named faith, a word which leads him to entertain tales truly disgusting, and which are rejected with indignation by all those who are guided by the sacred light that is to be found gleaming through the beautiful productions of Nature. Your late reply will amply justify me in making these remarks; for I have met with few who, with such daring credulity, have sheltered themselves under the influence of opinions so very contemptible. In my last, I told you what was the *dernier* resort of all theologians when baffled by arguments which are incon-

trovertible, and I now feel in no way astonished at your yet claiming all the advantage that you think belongs to this mode of reasoning. To an unprejudiced mind; however, it will appear, that religion has no basis to rest upon. You have advanced upon the same shallow ground, that the followers of Mahomet, or any other imposter would abide by; for to assert that there is nothing impossible with God, is assuredly one of the weakest holds, that you, in an argument of this kind, can possibly assume. I care not for the opinion of a Newton or a Boyle, upon a subject like this—notwithstanding the brilliancy of both, in the glorious discoveries of modern times, I can see amidst much gold there is a great deal of dross. When Newton takes up the pen of a theologian, we find him sinking into the common level of mankind, unfortunately tarnishing his bright name with all those silly conceits, which have been echoed by men like Calvin and Knox—enthusiasts, who never felt the rays of science dawn upon their gloomy and monastic minds. To enter into all the statements of your epistle would only force me to recapitulate what has already been said. I demanded of you proof, concerning certain events connected with the history of Christ, upon which the whole fabric is founded, but you reply to me almost in the same strain as you formerly did. It is impossible for you to aver any thing else, and what you have repeated only forcibly explains, what I have all along contended for, viz. that we have not the testimony of a single individual who was an eye witness to these supposed occurrences. To believe in them, because they are related by this man, or that man, appears to me the very height of folly. Why, upon this principle I must believe that the witch of Endor appeared to Saul, or that Balaam's ass actually spoke. These things are related by certain men; but surely no one now-a-days will imagine that they ever really happened. In fact, going upon this data, we might give credit to the most monstrous absurdities. I might even receive for truth the stories regarding Johanna Southcote; they are seriously promulgated by her fanatical admirers; but it does not follow, that we must believe in them. If the religion which you call divine had emanated from a being possessed of power and wisdom he would have given a system that would have been intelligible to all.

In every country where the problems of Euclid are known, their truth is readily acknowledged. There is no controversy concerning the beauty of such axioms; but the book which contains the inspired writing of a God presents such a heterogeneous mass of opinions, that ten thousand different creeds are, I dare say, formed upon them. Every one who is not warped in his judgment, by the powerful influence of early education, turns away with disgust from a collection of strange events, that have neither reason nor nature to support them. Those whose minds possess the materials for thinking, direct their attention to something more

grand and pleasing. It was upon these views, that I, in the outset of this correspondence, wished to avoid the dull and monotonous plan of referring to the *book* itself to explain any difference regarding our sentiments. The sequel has proved my suspicions to be correct, and amidst a great deal, which might have been omitted, the question is now determined by *yourself*, that we really have no satisfactory evidence to support the great props of the Christian religion. The *resurrection* and *ascension* were by you acknowledged as such; and now, after I have entirely disproved them, you come forward and tell me, that I am yet bound to receive the whole story as truth; because, forsooth, one or two interested individuals say, they saw Jesus on earth after he had been crucified. While we are connected with events deviating from the common course of nature, we shall find no end to your observations!

As for Jesus being put to death in the manner related, it is now a matter of no moment; but if any man ever asserted, that he saw Jesus alive after being dead, I maintain he is upholding an event that never possibly could happen. Such scenes would have attracted the attention, not only of the vulgar, but would have called forth the interest of men remarkable for their intellectual endowments. The Roman naturalists and historians do not in any form allude to them; and Philo and Josephus, who were in fact cotemporary, and who are authors of very shrewd discrimination, pass over in profound silence all those *appalling* wonders. Indeed, by the talents and industry of Richard Carlile, it is fairly established, that Jerusalem was destroyed a good number of years before the name of *Christian* stands recorded in common history, which has led to a strong surmise, that no such a being as Jesus ever existed.

In the history of mankind, where events are recorded of a natural description, we do not always seek the same chain of evidence as that which I have demanded relative to theological occurrences—it is only where supernatural things are detailed, the bare consideration of which, strike the minds of the ignorant, with wonder and astonishment, that we are warranted to look for something more than the mere assertion of a few individuals, who were, without doubt, intimately concerned, as far as the story goes, with the transactions which now form the question in dispute. However, as you have been cheered on, in this lengthened discussion, with the hope of being able to *convert* me, I feel somewhat sorry, that we should have entered into such a long, and bewildered path. It, perhaps, would have been better, had we taken a more natural one; but, notwithstanding this, I should have been pleased even in a wilderness, where darkness and obscurity every where abound, to have had the satisfaction of seeing you elucidate the subject. Could you have illumined the matter in the smallest degree, I should have received your remarks in the most attentive

manner; but the contrary is the case; you have only, by your observations, rendered it more perplexing. My opinions have not been formed upon a slight examination of this affair; and I can assure you, in my efforts to obtain knowledge, I have always endeavoured to keep clear of the baneful poison, which prejudice never fails to engender. Truth has alone been my object, as the mysteries that envelope theology embraced, in a strong degree, my early investigation. The beautiful poem, of Pope's *Essay on Man*, gave a stimulus to these enquiries, and, before I had attained my eighteenth year, I found myself confirmed in all the principles of Deism, after having read almost every author from Addison down to the Bishop of Llandaff, on the one hand, with those from Shaftsbury to the period of Paine, on the other.

Future years brought me into new views, and while studying anatomy and physiology at the University of Edinburgh, after much enquiry, I ranked my name among the number of a few, whose taste, directed them, to speculate, in the doctrines of Materialism. One of the lecturers seemed, throughout his whole course, to inveigh against such principles; his exertions were indefatigable, and as he had originally been educated for the church, he had not forgotten the usual cant and hypocrisy that prevails too often with churchmen. The unphilosophic distinction of the soul, being an independent principle from the body, was, therefore, his favorite theme; but I fortunately was induced to think for myself, upon these matters. His declamations were considered truly verbose, while my companions and I, often thought, that it did very well with him, to prattle as long as no one was allowed to answer him. In the dissecting room we, however, saw in vivid colours the falsity of his arguments. We beheld, amidst all the ruin which decomposition generally presents, the bodies of those, who were once animated, sink into their former principles.

Accustomed to such scenes, men acquainted with the phenomena of mind, considered the idea as truly chimerical, that imagined the vital principle, when once entirely destroyed, could ever possibly, in same form, again exist. Such ideas, they left to be cherished by churchmen, and those whose province it is to take care of the soul; for few, who have studied anatomy profoundly, can ever allow themselves to be carried down the stream of popular opinion, by reveries of such a fantastic nature. The lessons which a knowledge of the human system teach us, are too forcible not to possess the clearest demonstration, and always to a thinking mind, Materialism is the basis on which it rests.

These opinions were at this time greatly strengthened, when I reflected that they were espoused by such men as Murray and Leslie, the first of whom was, without doubt, the most celebrated chemist of the age, and whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of enjoying; the latter, as a Professor of Natural Philosophy, is well known, and who, about twenty years ago, was exposed to the ma-

lignancy of the church of Scotland, for advancing some ideas, regarding cause and effect, in his excellent work on heat. The Kirk, however, in this instance, failed in its rancour against *Atheism*. I have since pursued my studies, and if any thing has added to the confirmation of principles, in which I have long delighted, it has been the admirable lectures of Mr. Lawrence, whose poignancy of language, and clearness of judgment, entirely overthrow the puerile and fanciful conceits, of his antagonist Abernethy. The essays in that useful work the Republican, have likewise contributed much information, and with such a continued train of enquiry, it was not to be supposed, that any thing said in a correspondence of this kind, could ever have the smallest effect in convincing me of the truth of your religion. As I had seen the endless disputes, and bitter wrangling, that the subject of theology, frequently has given birth to, I wished to avoid them, by entering upon the great field of nature; but I must again say, you have hitherto avoided this. In your letters, I can see nothing, but the confusion of a mind, clouded with theological jargon. The same feeling which you possess, has given origin to the different thousand sects, which abound in the history of Christianity, each claiming a superiority, and every one distinguished for that tenacity of opinion which is alone peculiar to bigotry. Exalted, as it were, upon a pinnacle, and separated from the narrow prejudices, with which the human mind is too often surrounded, I have often beheld with pity, the infatuated and wretched Catholic; I have lamented over the superstitious and dogmatic Protestant, and have regretted still more, when contrasted with the other two, the liberal but deluded Unitarian; all of whom could never be guided so very differently in their views, if a standard of truth had been presented to them, of a nature clear, comprehensive, and intelligible. But the mighty influence of a false education, has, alas! the tendency of keeping mankind fast in the shackles of superstition.

It is not without much effort that we can free ourselves, from the yoke, that has goaded us, from our earliest infancy, and therefore, in the present day, amidst all the knowledge, which exists, there are few, comparatively speaking, who have the energy of intellect, necessary, to overthrow in their minds, the base superstructure so cunningly devised by deep and designing Priests. It is only requisite for a man upon a subject of so much importance to think firmly for himself, if he does so, he will soon find the cheat exposed, he will behold religion, in no other light, than the invention of a daring few, who in every country, and in every age, have endeavoured for the vilest of purposes, to keep the human faculties, in a state of the most abject dependence. Having premised these matters, it is now high time, for me to advert to that passage in your letter which alludes to *impossibilities*. I do not admit, that any such a miracle, with regard to the sun, could in

any form, ever take place, and I deny, that there exists, in nature, any power such as you talk of. When we survey the great machinery of the universe, we find it governed by laws, entirely unalterable—every thing around us, the effect of the combinations of matter, and the various changes, forms, and modifications, which it undergoes, proceed alone from motion. The intelligent lessons, of experience, demonstrate this, and to create, in our imaginations, beings, separated from matter, is to believe in things, that have no reality. Man, unfortunately, in his speculations, regarding a Deity, has exceeded the boundaries of nature, and in his conjectures, has raised up phantoms, the fanciful existence of which, tends only to alarm and confound him. In the history of mankind we find the notion of a Deity arising entirely through the dark and muddy channels of ignorance; if nature directed them rightly in this matter, there would be but one uniform idea of a creator, but in every age, and in every country, the most preposterous fancies have been received, relative to his existence; and this universality of opinion, however absurd and dissonant, has often been brought forward, by theists to prove the truth of their arguments.

(To be continued.)

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER, FROM A FRIEND AT
HULL, TO MR. CARLILE.

You seem to think, that Voltaire made “a vile compromise with the Christian Priests of France.” I believe he did no such thing—Priests and bigots, to support a system of error, seldom hesitate to have recourse to fiction and falsehood. With regard to the death of Voltaire, they told the most palpable untruths. One set of them declared positively that he sincerely repented of his errors, and died happily in the true faith of the Catholic church. Another set of bigots maintained, that he died impenitent, in a state of the greatest horror and despair. Now one party evidently lied—the fact was, that both did. Through the weakness of a female in Voltaire’s family, a Priest obtained access to him when on his death-bed. Voltaire looked at him with disgust, and in reply to his pious, or rather impertinent exhortations, merely said, “Laisser-moi mourir en paix”—turned his face from the Priest, and immediately expired. Such were the last words of that great man!

Your correspondent, Mr. Dickinson, of Dewsbury, had a female relation at Voltaire’s, during his last illness, and she bears testi-

mony to the falseness of the accounts published respecting his death. It is, however, but candid to state, that previously, when Voltaire was in a high fever, and bordering on a state of delirium, an impudent Priest did terrify him into a renunciation of his opinions. He then acquiesced in all the dogmas of the Catholic religion. But when he recovered from the fever, he retracted his renunciation, and lashed the Priest most unmercifully, for taking that unfair advantage over him. Allowing for a moment that Voltaire did die in the profession of the Catholic faith, what can the Protestant infer from this death-bed story, but that the doctrines of transubstantiation and the rest are all true?

I knew an Italian who used to call the Virgin Mary a "wh—e," yet, on the apprehension of death, he invoked not only her aid, but that of all the saints in the calendar. Are we thence to conclude, that his ideas, when in a state of terror and alarm, were the most correct.

This is taking more notice of death-bed stories than they deserve, and I add no more than the signature of

Yours sincerely,
J. J.

Hull, October 15, 1824.

TO MR. R. CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

FELLOW CITIZEN,

WE have made a beginning, with a subscription at Sherborne, in the county of Dorset, to express our approbation of your principles and perseverance, and our detestation of the conduct of your persecutors who seek to cherish ignorance and superstition: proceeds at present as follows:

	s.	d.
J. W.	5	0
A Deist, enlightened through the persecution of Mr. Carlile	2	0
A Friend to Free Discussion	1	0
An Enemy to Black Slugs	1	0
A Republican	1	0
A Deist, enlightened through the late persecutions	1	0
A Deist	0	6

The above is a small collection made among some of your friends in this town; and they hope that you will accept it as a token of the esteem they have for you. They trust you will go on in the arduous undertaking that you have begun in enlightening your fellow countrymen, that they may in the end see through priestcraft, and all other crafts, that are robbing them of this world's good.

They also lament that you are still in the fangs of tyranny ; but it must be a consolation to you, that thousands have to thank you for your perseverance in this great great struggle, and millions unborn will have to praise the name of Carlile.

I remain,

A SINCERE FRIEND TO TRUTH AND JUSTICE.

Note.—I am glad to see a beginning in Sherborne, few as are the present number of friends. I know the nature of the principles I advocate, so far as to know, that I never lose a friend upon principle when once so made, and that their numbers must go on increasing. There has been a little seed sown of late in Dorset, and I find it springing up rapidly all around me. Should I be kept in your Gaol another year or two, I will engage to produce a strong effect in your county.

R. C.

A few friends, enemies to priestcraft, met at the Mortimer Arms, Tottenham Court Road, on Monday August 23, 1824, to contribute their mites as a token of their satisfaction of Mr. Richard Carlile's Principles.

W. H. Leak, brave Carlile! extinguisher of Devils, Ghosts, and Priests!	2	6
W. J. Leak, a constant reader of "The Republican"	1	6
S. B., a Townsman of Carlile's	2	6
R. Gray, No. 36, Homer Street, Mary-le-bone, an Enemy to Persecution	2	6
R. J. A., one who wishes success to every honest cause	1	6
R. Steer, 39, Frederick Place, Hampstead Road	1	0
W. Tilbury, ditto, well wisher of Carlile	1	0
G. Smith, ditto	1	0
J. Shaw, No. 36, Ogle Street, formerly a Strenuous Supporter and Preacher of the doctrines of the Bible	1	6
R. Strickland, from Dorchester	1	0
W. Ellis	1	0
S. Leamen, No. 3, Pancras Street, Tottenham Court Road	1	0
Mr. Morgan, an Admirer of Carlile's Principles	2	0
R. B.	2	6

Printed and Published by R. CARLILE, 84, Fleet Street.—All Correspondences for "The Republican" to be left at the place of publication.